

THE
Hearers Duty:

A
SERMON
PREACHED

At *Anne Aldersgate London,*
at the finishing of the *Morning*
Exercise at that Church.

By *Mr. Christopher Love*
B. D. and Pastor thereof.

Revised and Corrected according to his own Notes.

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THE
DUTY OF

CONGREGATION
PREACHED

At St. James Aldersgate London,
at the beginning of the Morning
Service at that Church.

By Mr. Christopher Love
B. D. and Pastor thereof.

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A Sermon Preached at
Anne Aldersgate, in the
time of the Morning
Exercise.

LUKE II. 28.

*But he said, Yea, rather
 blessed are they that bear
 the Word of God and
 keep it.*

IN the humanity of Jesus Christ
 such a lustre and beauty did
 shine and break forth, that
 even in such a despicable per-
 son as he was deemed to be,
 yet the very words which he spake, and
 the works that he did, declared him to
 be no lesse then the Son of God; as in
Joh. 7. 46. his very enemies confessed

that never man spake as Christ spake, he spake better then ever man spake, by the words he delivered it was evident he was more then man, but the works which he did, spake plainly with an audible voice his divinity. And concerning the miracles which he wrought, it was said of many of them, that never was it thus done since the beginning of the World, his miracles wrought admiration even in the hearts of those men, in whom they wrought envie and malice against him. The miracle specified in this Chapter, the dispossessing of a dumb man of the Devill; this did spread abroad the fame and renown of Christ through many parts of the world, and though his enemies were so obstinate, that they would not (notwithstanding these miracles that he wrought) acknowledge his divinity, yet there was a young woman that slipt out of all the company and went to Christ, and lift up her voice saluting him in these words, saying, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which gave thee suck*; though the Pharisees would not call him blessed, yet this young woman cryed out, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee*. And had this commendation been given to another, it might have made him proud, but it works a contrary effect upon Christ, he rather gives her a rebuke then any thanks, and tels her, that rather
blesse

bleſſed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it. And thus I have brought you to the words of my text. But before I come to give you the doctrine which the words will afford, give me leave to ſpeak ſomething concerning the young womans ſaluting of Chriſt after this manner; the words which ſhe ſpoke were a common proverb amongſt the Jews: when any man had done a thing commendable, that was excellent and extraordinary, they would preſently crie out to him, *Bleſſed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave the ſuck*; from whence I would note to you thus much.

That good Children are a great bleſſing and commendation to their Parents.

Doct.

And hence it is that you read ſo often in Scripture what a great bleſſing it is for a Father, to be the Father of a good Son; and for a Mother to be the Mother of a good Child, in Prov. 10. 1. & 15. 20. And on the contrary, what a great curſe it is for Parents to bring forth wicked children into the World, a wicked child is a ſhame to his Father, and a heavineſſe to his Mother that brought him into the World.

The Uſe I would have you make of this doctrine is this:

Uſe.

You that have good Children, that are instruments of the praiſe and glory of God, bleſſe his name for them; and you that

μετ' αὐτῆς
μαργαρίτης.

that have bad children look upon it as a stroke of Gods heavy hand upon you; but this is only a point by the way, from the womans speaking thus of Christ, *blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck*; but Christ told her, *rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it*. Christ sayes *rather blessed*, he does not not say that his mother that bare him was not blessed, for she did bear him in her heart as well as in her womb: but Christ speaks this with a gentle and loving rebuke to the woman that gave him this commendation; sayes Christ, thou cryest out, *blessed is the womb that bear thee*, but I say, *rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it*; so that from hence note, from Christs example here,

Doct.

That you must take a great deal of heed that you be not tickled with pride, when ever you hear your selves or yours commended; you see here Christ would give no way to their commendations of his mother.

And then again, yea *rather blessed*; Christ sayes that those are *rather blessed* that hear the *Word of God and keep it*, then his mother that brought him into the world: from whence observe,

Doct.

That a beleever that hears and obeyes Christ is *rather blessed* in so doing, then the Virgin Mary was meerly in bringing Jesus Christ into the World, though it were the happiest birth

birth that ever Woman brought forth.

And oh how should this be a spur to hearers to make them obey and practise what they hear !

But I shall keep you no longer in the entrance into the words, and therefore I shall only give you something to note from the manner of the expression that Christ here useth, and then draw out the doctrine the words will afford. In the form of speech that Christ here useth, observe, it is not said, *blessed are they that bear the Word of God*, there are many sorts of hearers that come short of blessing, *but blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.*

οὐκ ἔστιν
οὐκ ἔστιν
αὐτοὶ.

There are 4. sorts of hearers, spoken of in Mat. 13. and three of them are bad, and but one good, that hears the Word aright; all that hear the Word doe not obtain a blessing.

(1) It is not said, Blessed are they that hear, but, Blessed are they that *hear and keep* what they do hear.

1.

(2) It is not said, Blessed are they that *beleeve* (observe that) though this be true, yet it is not said so, lest men should think that a bare and naked beleeving were enough to entitle them to blessednesse: there are many men that pretend to faith and assurance, and yet live above duties, above hearing, and praying, &c. and therefore Christ sayes not, Blessed are they that be-

2.

believe, but they that *hear* the Word and keep it.

3. (3) It is not said, Blessed are they that keep the Word in a disjunction from hearing, but they that keep the Word in a conjunction with hearing, blessed are you that hear and keep. There are many men that pretend to be high flown in their practise, and to keep what Christ commands them, but yet it is a disjunctive obedience, they will not hear; those are only blessed in Christs esteem, that *keep and bear* the Word of God.

4. (4) It is not said here in the text, Blessed shall they be that *hear and keep* the Word of God, but blessed are they that *hear and keep* the Word; thou shalt not only be a blessed man when thou comest to heaven, but thou art a blessed man whilest thou art here upon earth; thou hast thy fruit unto holinesse, and the end everlasting life, Rom. 6. 22.

(5) Observe further, it is not said, Blessed are they that *hear and keep it*, but *Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it*. For you may hear errors and blasphemies and keep them, and be accursed for so doing; but *blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it*. And this should teach men to take heed, how they hear, and what they hear, and whom they hear, and that they hear nothing but that which is the

the Word of God. We read of some that should follow teachers, that bring in damnable heresies, 2 Pet. 2. 3. many shall follow their pernicious wayes. Now such as these are not blessed, that hear men that bring in errors and heresies, but they are cursed rather.

αἱρέσεις
ἀπωλείας.
ταῖς ἀπο-
λείαις.

(6) Observe further, Christ does not say, *Rather blessed are they that hear my sayings and keep them*; but, *that hear Gods Word*: for had Christ said, rather blessed are they that hear my Word, the people might have been ready to think, that Christ did intail blessednesse only to his own Preaching, and to them that did hear Christ personally teach here upon earth: but sayes he, *Blessed are they that hear the Word of God*, be it either by *Paul*, or *Apollus*, or *Timothy*, or *Titus*, or any Minister of Christ to the worlds end. Who ever shall hear the Word of God contained in the Scriptures, Preached out of their mouths, and shall keep and obey it, they are rather blessed then my Mother that bare me is, for that only reason of bringing me into the world. There is in this very expression a secret glory put upon the Ministers of the Word, and this is the reason of that saying in Scripture, *He that believes shall do greater works then Christ did*; that is, a faithfull Minister should convert more soules then ever Christ did: it is true

6.

Christ might (if he had so pleased) have converted every man that heard him, but he would not, lest men should thereby have undervalued his Ministers, and have thought that none could convert souls but Christ; and therefore there were more converted by Peter and other Apostles, then there were by Christ himself; because he might hereby encourage men to the hearing of ordinary Ministers.

There were some in the Church of Corinth, 1 Cor. 1. 12. that said some of them, We are for Paul; others, we are for Apollos; others, we are for Cephas; and others, we are for Christ. Now the Apostle blames them that any of them should say, I am of Christ; there were some among them that said, I care not for hearing of Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, I will hear Jesus Christ: it was a vanity in them to undervalue the Ministry of Paul and Apollos, and to cry up Christ; it is a sinfull crying up of Christ to cry down Paul and Apollos. And so in these times for men to cry up Christ, and yet to cry down the Ministry, is as sinfull now as it was in the Apostles time; and therefore Christ himself was carefull to preserve the honour of the Ministry that was to succeed him to the end of the world: *Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it.*

(7) It is not said, Rather blessed are they for hearing, and for keeping the Word, but, Blessed are they that *hear* and *that keep it*.

Blessed doers never come in with a *for*, but only with an *if* or a *that*; the Lord does not blesse thee *for thy hearing*, though thou shouldest hear as many Sermons as there are dayes, but he blesseth them that *hear*, and that practise what they hear; hearing the Word and practising and obeying of it, are the qualifications or characteristickall notes of such persons as shall be blessed by Christ; but not the causes of their blessednesse.

And thus I have given you these seven notes from the form of speech Christ here useth. I shall now explain the words a little more to you, *Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it*.

What is meant here by *keeping the Word* you hear?

Ans. You must know there is a double keeping of the Word, the one in your memories, the other in your practise.

1. In our memories, this you have mentioned in *Luke 2. 19.* it is said there that *Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.* Our memories should be like the Arke wherein the pot of Manna was kept; the Word of God should be treasured up in our memories as the pot of

*οὐρανίου
conserva-
tio.*

Manna was in the Arke : but this is not the keeping here spoken of, for there are many men that keep the Word in their memories, and yet never practise it in their lives.

2. There is a keeping of the Word in your practise. When you have a conscientious care to sway your practise answerable to what you hear and know, and this is the keeping that is here meant ; *Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it ; that is, keep it in their practise, and make conscience to do what they hear and know.*

The words being thus opened, the observation from them will be this.

Doct.

That they are rather blessed that hear the Word of God and practise what they hear, then the mother of Jesus Christ was for bringing him into the world.

Beloved, it is a point that I confesse, had it not been in the Bible, it had been incredible, that those that hear the Word and keep it, should be rather blessed, then she that bare Christ in her womb. That Christ should put a rather blessed upon thee oh man or woman that hearest the Word of God and keepest it, then upon the Virgin Mary for bearing Christ into the World; what a great priviledge is this!

Beloved, it is worth your noting, what

a different dialect is used, between this woman here in the text, and Elizabeth that was cousin german to the Virgin Mary; this woman in the text she cries out, *Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck.* But Elizabeth she sayes, *Blessed is she that beleeves,* if the Virgin Mary had not bore Christ in her heart as well as in her womb, she had not been a blessed woman.

Before I give you the reasons of the point I shall only draw this inference from it, to confute the dotage of the Church of Rome that do so much dote upon the Virgin Mary; where they have one service for the glory of Christ, they have twenty for the glory of the Virgin Mary. They would make the world beleeve that she was without sin, and if so, why should Christ pronounce others rather blessed then she? This then is a confutation of the Church of Rome, that hold that the Virgin Mary had no originall sin; and if so, then she should have been rather blessed then any one else in the world; and if that be true, then this text must needs be false, for Christ sayes here, *that rather blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it, then she.*

(2) This confutes them, because they do so crie up the righteousness and holiness and dignity of the Virgin Mary; that they do undervalue the righteousness of

Jesus

Jesus Christ her Son; they so dote upon the Virgin Mary, that they make her the great Mediator for us to the Father; whereas we say, and maintain, that Christ is the only mediator, for *there is but one mediator between God and Man, the man Christ Jesus.*

Ministers had never more need to confute Popish doctrines and opinions then now. For never was Popery more like to increase and flourish in this Land then now it is, and therefore I do the rather give these glances concerning them because there is a great deal of danger, lest people be infected with these Popish fooleries. I speak this upon my own experience; I have been a preacher these 10. years, and in all that time I never perceived so many inclining towards Popery, as I have done within these two months; since these late strange actions that have been done amongst us, I have seen many to stagger about our Religion, and have been strongly tempted to imbrace and fall to Popery, which is the reason that induced me to make this digression.

We come now to the Reasons of the point.

Reas. 1.

(1) Because that Christ does count such in neer relation to himself, nay in a neerer relation to him, then his own naturall friends, as in Mark 3. 33, 34, 35. when they

they told Christ, that his mother and his brethren were without seeking for him, sayes he, *Who is my mother or my brethren? Whosoever shall hear the Word of God and keep it, the same is my brother my sister and mother.*

(2) Because if you hear the Word of God and keep what you hear, you shall persever and have the end of your faith; in Mat. 7. 24. sayes Christ there, *Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended and the floods came, and the windes blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.* So those only that hear the Word of God and practise it, shall have the end of their faith, and have their soules built upon that rock Christ Jesus, that shall never be removed. Reas. 2.

(3) You are blessed in practising what you hear, because thereby you may bring many others to blessednesse: in 1 Pet. 3. 1. sayes the Apostle there, *Wives be in subjection to your own husband, that if any obey not the word, they may without the word be won by the conversation of their wives.* Reas. 3.

And those men that have been won to Christ by your good example, when they come to appear before God in judgment, by seeing you they shall glorifie God in the day of their visitation, and shall blesse God that

that by your means they were brought to heaven.

Reas. 4.

(4) They that practise what they hear are blessed; Because, though they may not bring others to heaven, yet they are sure to come to heaven themselves, in Rev. 14. 12, 13. *Here is the patience of the Saints, and here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus: Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, they rest from their labour, and their works follow them: those that keep the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, they shall come themselves to heaven though they bring no body else thither. Where a Gospel life goes before, an Angels life shall follow after. You that lead Gospel lives here, assure your selves that you shall lead Angels lives hereafter, and therefore make conscience to do and practise what you hear and know.*

We come now to the Application, and the Use that I shall make of it shall be threefold, for Lamentation, Consolation, and Exhortation.

Use of
Lament.

(1) For Lamentation, is it so that they are rather blessed that hear and practise what they hear in the word, then the Virgin Mary? Oh then how should this consideration provoke you to Lamentation, that when you may have blessing upon such terms as these, *Hear my Word* and

and make conscience to practise it, and you shall be blessed, yet you do reject your own mercie. Oh thou perverse and hard hearted man or woman, that wilt not practise what thou hearest, thou dost reject thy own mercy. The Devill could not damn thee, if thou wouldest not damn thy self. Thou Oh man that let the Word say what it will, thou wilt do what thou list, dost thou not stand in the way of thy own blessednesse, and reject thy own mercy?

And to set home this particular upon your hearts, give me leave to presse it with these 3 or 4 Considerations.

(1) Consider, that thou that dost not make conscience to practise what thou hearest, thou dost provoke the Lord to take away the Word from thee, that thou shalt not hear it at all: in *Amos 8. 9.* because that *Israel* was weary of the Word of God, and of his Sabbaths, saying, *When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell Corn, and the Sabbath, that we may set forth Wheat?* Therefore sayes God, *I will cause the Sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day, and I will send a famine in the Land, not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the Words of the Lord.*

Consid. 1.

God may take away the Word from you, for your not profiting under it, in *Mat. 21. 43.* *The Kingdome of God shall be*

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taken

taken from you and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Consid. 2.

weipany
in 6X07.

(2) Consider, that thy hearing, if thou dost not practise what thou hearest, will aggravate thy damnation another way; in Joh. 15. 22. says Christ, If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin. So in Luke 12. 47. That servant that knew his Lords will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

It is an observation that one hath upon the Prophesie of *Esay* from the 13. to the 24. Chapter of that Prophesie, you shall read there of many dismall denuntiati-
ons of judgment, the burden of *Babylon*, the burden of *Tyre*, the burden of *Damascus*, and of *Moab*, and of *Egypt*, and the burden of the desert of the Sea; many nations and people did the Lord command the Prophet to pronounce a burdensome Prophesie against; but amongst them all there is the burden of the valley of vision in the 22. Chapter, and it is observed that this is the most burdensome of them all, and the reason is, because that was a place of vision and knowledge, where the Word of God was dispensed, and because of their sinfulness and unprofitableness, their burden is heavier then all the rest, because it is the burden of the valley of vision.

Though

Though other men may goe to hell that live in those parts of the World where the Word was never taught, and where they never heard the voice of the glad tidings of salvation sounding in their ears; yet those that live where the Gospel is preached, and know and yet do not walk answerably, shall go to hell with a heavier burden, then the other shall doe.

(3) An other consideration is this, that thou art void of the love of God, thou lovest not him, nor he thee, if thou dost not make conscience to practise what thou dost hear; in 1 Joh. 2. 5. *Who so keepeth his Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected, and he that sayes he loveth him and keepeth not his Commandements is a lyer, and the truth is not in him.*

Consid. 3.

I shall now speak something by way of Exhortation, to provoke you all in the fear of God to make conscience to practise what you hear and know; and to this end consider, that God doth look upon all your knowledge and profession to be nothing worth, unlesse you practise what you know and professe. God looks upon all your hearing and praying, &c. as nothing, unlesse your conversation be answerable to it: and is it not pity that for want of practise you should lose the blessing of all your hearing, and make

Use of Exhorta.

it of no worth or esteem in Gods account, that though thou hast a great deal of notional knowledge, yet he looks upon thee as an ignorant sor, and thou that hast heard so many Sermons, as if thou hadst never heard one all thy life time? It is said of the Sons of *Eli*, that they *knew not the Lord*, why they? Surely they did know him, but because they were Sons of *Belial*, and unholy and profane in their lives, therefore God did not account their knowledge and gifts to be any thing, because they did not practise what they did know. Oh then beloved, shall God account thy hearing as nothing, and thy praying as nothing, because thou doest not make conscience to practise what thou doest hear and know?

(2) You can have no perswasion in your own soul of the love of God towards you, unlesse you make conscience to practise what you hear; in *Joh. 14. 15.* sayes Christ, *If you love me keep my Commandements*; and therefore often in Scripture these two are put together, *Loving of God and keeping his Commandements.*

Use of
Consolati.

But now by way of Consolation, methinks I hear a poor soul say, Are they only blessed that hear the Word of God and keep what they hear? who then shall be blessed, for who is able to keep what he hears? I many times hear a duty com-

commanded, but I am not able to performe it, and such and such things required, but I am not able to keep them, and such and such graces pressed to obtain, but I am not able to get them.

Ans. For thy comfort know, that didst thou live under a Covenant of works, thou couldest never be a blessed man, for thou art not able to perform the conditions of it : for that requires thee to keep and fulfill the whole law of God perfectly and personally. But now being under a Covenant of grace, God accepts of thy keeping of the Law if it be done sincerely though it be but imperfectly, and though it be not done in thy own person, yet if it be done in the person of an other, the Lord accepts of it. God sayes to us under a Covenant of grace *believe and live*, if you make conscience to keep the Word, though you cannot keep it, yet I will pardon thee and accept of thee ; and though thou canst not keep the Law in thy own person, yet if my Son keeps it for thee, I will accept of his obedience, as if it were done by thee. And therefore you must not lie down under despondency of mind, because you are not under a Covenant of works, but under a Covenant of grace, wherein Christ accepts of sincere obedience though it be not perfect.

(2) Know for thy comfort that if thou
hast

hast a full purpose of heart to keep that which thou hearest, it is lookt upon by God, as if thou didst keep it, in *Heb. 11. 17.* it is said there, that by faith *Abraham* when he was tried did offer up his son *Isaac*; because *Abraham* did in the resolution and purpose of his heart determine to obey God in offering up his Son, therefore the Scripture looks upon it as done, though it were only in purpose, not actually.

Why so, thou that art the Son of *Abraham*, and hast the faith of *Abraham*, those holy duties which thou dost desire to perform better, as to pray better, and to hear better, and practise and live better then thou dost; in divine account this is lookt upon as if it were really done.

FINIS.
